
MR. SPADEMAN'S
SERMON
FOR
Reformation of Manners.

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SERMON

Preach'd Novemb. 14. 1698.

AND NOW

Publish'd at the Request

OF THE

SOCIETIES

FOR

Reformation of Manners,

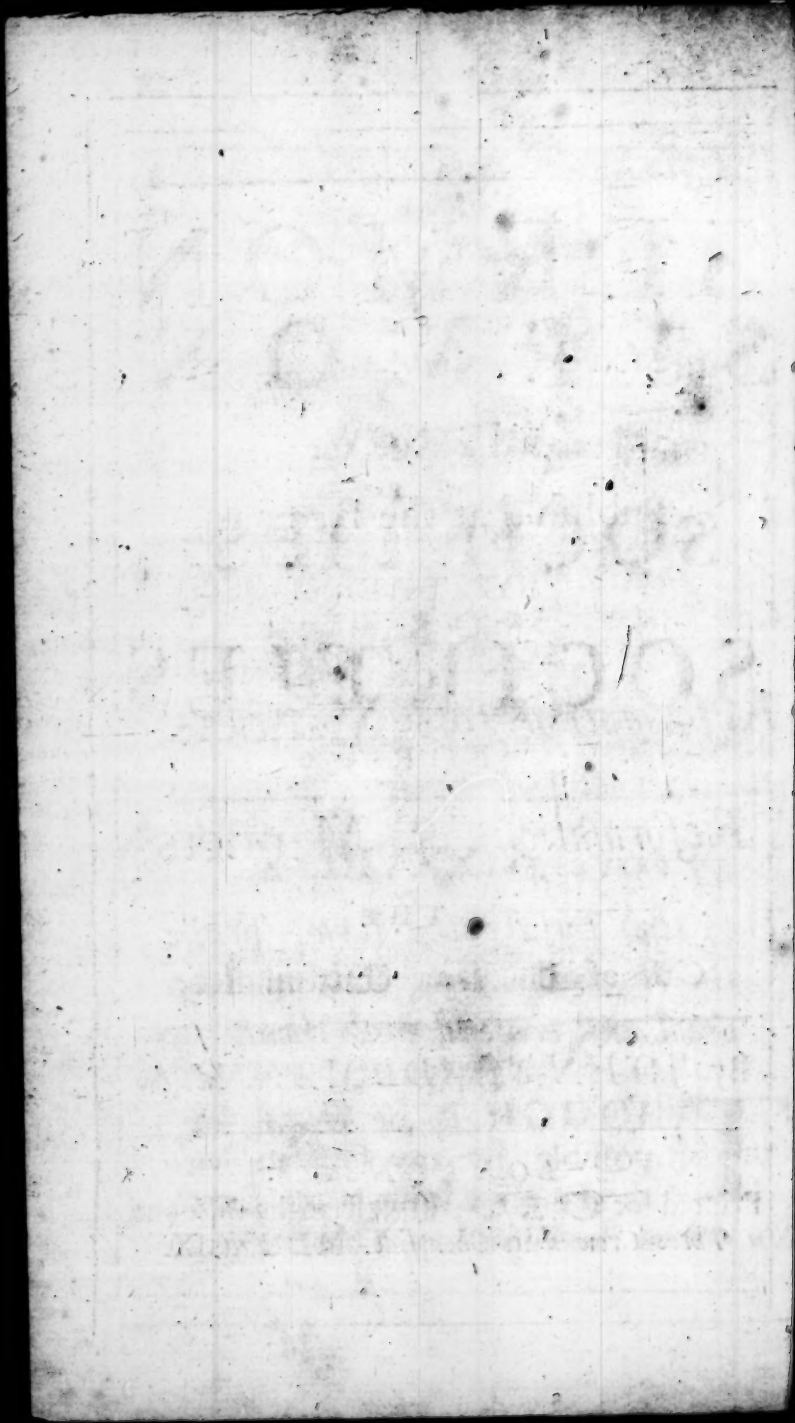
IN THE

Cities of *London* and *Westminster,*

By *JOHN SPADEMAN. M. A.*

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S E R M O N

Preach'd before the
SOCIETIES
FOR

Reformation of Manners.

PROVERBS XXVIII. 4.

*They that forsake the Law, praise
the Wicked: But such as keep
the Law, contend with them.*

THOUGH it be found im-
possible, by any Human Me-
thods, to Banish, and Expel
Sin out of the World: This *Enemy* is
B so

so entrench'd and fortify'd, that no created Power or Skill is able totally to Vanquish, and Drive him out, either from particular Persons, or Communities of Men: The same Conclusion ought not to be made concerning *open Wickedness*, and the visible Practice of Sin, there is a possibility of Subduing this Monster: As 'tis found possible to ridd a Country of some *Species* of Rapacious Beasts, tho' 'tis impracticable to destroy all the *Vermin*, which lie under Ground, and are hid in Holes, and Dens of the Earth. That Sin which is conceal'd in the Heart, or is acted in secret, lyeth out of the reach of Human Attempts, a Divine Almighty Arm alone is able to crush, and destroy it: But when this Pestilence wasteth at Noon-day, and appears in the places of Concourse, this Case admits a Remedy, and there are proper *Methods* which, under the *Divine Benediction*, are able to stop the *Plague of Wickedness*. The God of the whole Earth has not abandon'd it to be wasted by this *Infection*, without Means of resisting, and removing it. 'Tis reasonable to conclude,
That

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That *He* hath formed Men into *Civil Societies*, on this Design, that *Order*, and *Government*, *Laws*, and *Punishments* might be apply'd to the restraining of *Sin* and *Immorality*. For the best order'd *Societies* could not be either pleasing to God, (as the Wisest Pagans judg'd they were) *Cicero Somn. Scip.* or, in the issue, advantageous to Men, if they did only relieve the *Necessities*, and minister to the Safety, and *Pleasure of Life*, and did not serve the higher Design of repressing *Vices*, and purging the *Impuritie* that defiles the World, and threatens Ruine to whole Nations.

We of this *Nation* have long experienc'd the vigilant Care, and continued Kindness of *Heaven*, which have defeated the pernicious Designs of our Enemies, deliver'd us from many threatening Dangers, and Crown'd us with distinguishing Mercies. How inexcusable shall we be, if we abuse and forfeit the Kindness of God, and by doing Wickedly, provoke him to *Turn, and Destroy us after he hath done us Good?* (Josh. 24. 20.) And nothing can pre-

vent so dismal an Issue of Things, but a vigorous Eudeavour to check the Contagion of *Vice*, by a constant Prosecuting of the truly *Christian Design* already enter'd upon, of Reforming the Lives of Men, and repressing the Vices, which too long have reproach'd this Nation: Unto which Design, the instructive Words of *Solomon*, that have been read, give an encouraging Assistance: For they both direct to the proper Method, that is to be used, and enforce that Direction by cogent Motives, drawn from the infamous Character of those who praise the Wicked and the Honouring Title of those who contend with (or against) them. *They that forsake the Law, praise the Wicked: But such as keep the Law, contend with them.*

The latter part of this *Aphorism* is more directly sutable to the occasion of this Day: but the former part, contains an Instruction, that is not improper to be seriously reflected on, at this time, in which I shall endeavour to assist you, by

I. Describing the Agents spoken of: *They that forsake the Law.*

II. Ex-

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II. Explaining the Action ascribed to them: *Praise the Wicked.*

III. Representing the horrid Character of both. As to the

I. The Agents are said to *forsake the Law*. I take it for granted, that the Divine Law is here to be understood, (as in two other Verses of this Chapter, 7, and 9. the Law, without any addition, is so interpreted.) For it is not universally a Crime to forsake a mere Human Law, which may be so framed, that we are obliged to forsake and contradict it. But the Divine Law has such eternal, and invariable *Equity*, and carries so unchangable Obligation, that nothing can justify the forsaking of it. 'Tis the heaviest charge, that can be drawn up against any Persons, that they have forsaken the Law of God, and the most dismal Punishments are threatened to such, *Jerem. 9. 13, 15, 16.* And the Lord saith, *Because they have forsaken my Law which I set before them; — Therefore thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Behold I will feed them, even this People with Worm-*
B 3 wood,

wood, and give them Water of Gall to drink — And I will send a Sword after them, till I have consumed them. The forsaking of the Divine Law is not a light trivial matter in the eyes of God, as it is too commonly in those of Men. But this forsaking of the Law, is not the mere transgressing of it, by particular Omission of Duty, and Commission of Sin; for both these are consistent with the Favour of God, and may comport, with the keeping of the Law, in the Evangelick Sense. Forsaking of the Law, in Scripture Style, imports such a deserting, or revolting from it, as renders it useless, and ineffectual for the ordering of our Actions: The Divine Rule is renounced, and its Yoke cast off, by choosing and obeying another, and contrary Law, even that of Sin. And though these Lawless Ones are unwilling to acknowledge their true Character, and ready to profess a respect to the Law of God, yet we shall certainly know 'em by their Fruits, and particularly, by their *praising of the Wicked*, which is

II. The Action ascribed to them who forsake the Law : to understand which, we must not restrain the term *Praise* to the narrow Sense, that in common discourse we fix on it, as if it denoted only a Verbal Commendation, though this Sense is not excluded. The Practise has been, and still is, too common of absolving and justifying of bad Men, (when 'tis said to a Wicked Man, *Thou art righteous*, cap. 24. 24.) and of adorning with flattering *Encomiums*, those who deserve general abhorrence. How often have those Noble Things, *Wit* and *Eloquence*, been basely employ'd in extolling the worst Persons and Things. The Auditors of a persecuting *Herod* applauded his Oration, by this impious Acclamation, *It is the voice of a God, and not of a Man*, Acts 12. 22. Which Blasphemous Adulation was terribly confuted by the Divine Vengeance which condemned that Mortal God to be eaten by Worms, while he liv'd, and by that opprobrious Disease to end his Life. Such another piece of ridiculous Blasphemy, an *Atheistick Poet* was guilty

Lucretius,
Lib. 5.

of, in praising his Master *Epicurus*, whom he makes a God, because he had boldly deny'd a *Providence*, and a future State; as if by this rare Discoverie, He had been a more worthy *Benefactor* to Mankind, than those, whose Inventions had ministred to the *Advantage* and *Pleasure* of *Life*.

But besides Praising by Words and Language, there is another, by actions which conciliate esteem, and honour to a Person. As when 'tis said of the Vertuous Woman, that *her own Works praise her in the gates*, Prov. 31. 31. *i. e.* Do create esteem and respect to her. The Wicked are thus *praised*, when they are encourag'd and favour'd by those who have Authority, and occasion to discourage and depress them: When Honours are plac'd upon them, who declare themselves to be *Enemies of Righteousness*. This hath been too commonly practis'd in all Ages: In the times of *Pagan Ignorance*, some vile and brutish Miscreants have been Deify'd, and Worship'd after their Death, and Divine Honour

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Honour pay'd to those who deserv'd the most general abhorrence; (as the instances of the *Cretan Jupiter*, and several others, evince.) The *Light* of the *Gospel* hath banisht this impious usage from the Places which enjoy it; but even among *Professing Christians*, 'tis become too common a Spectacle, that the vilest of Men are favour'd, and advanc'd, and find several who patronize, and protect them: which practice prov'd fatal to the *Benjamite Tribe*, from which the other Tribes, in a solemn manner, demanded the delivering up of some *Children of Belial*, (*Judg. 20 13.*) that they might be put to death, and by this means, evil might be put away from *Israel*: But ('tis added) the *Children of Benjamin* would not hearken to the voice of their Brethren. The dismal consequence of this favouring of Evil-doers, is largely related in the Sacred History, to deter all others from this praising or patronizing of Wicked Men. To which purpose it will be useful.

III. To

III. To represent the horrid Character, both of the Agents here mentioned, and the Act ascribed to them: The former is evident at first view: He that forsakes the Divine Law bears the blackest marks of Horror. For

1. He is guilty of the worst *Treason* and *Rebellion*: He revolts from his rightful *Ruler*, he lifts up his hand against his *Father*, and makes War against the highest, and best *Sovereign*. Who would not dread so infamous a Character? Who would be patient of so reproachful a Name? A meer transgressing of the Law, is not rebelling against Heaven, but the forsaking of it, can have no milder name; such who desert and renounce the Law, do in effect say to the Almighty, *He shall not reign over us; we owe no subjection, or obedience, to the God that made us.* A Language that is so intolerable, that even ungodly Men are ashamed to utter it with their Lips.

2. There

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2. There is the *basest perfidiousness* in the forsaking of the Divine Law by those who profess Religion: For such, at the same time, forsake the *Covenant of God*, and virtually renounce their very Baptism. There can't be a more infamous Character than that of a *Perfidious Wretch*: This exposeth an *Adultrous* to the heaviest reproach, that when *she forsaketh the guide of her Youth*, she also *forgets the Covenant of her God*, *Prov. 2. 17.* All who are dedicated to the blessed God, by Baptism, become Children of the Covenant, (*Acts 3. 25.*) which strongly obliges them to keep the Divine Law.

3. There is in those who forsake the Law, the worst *Cruelty* to themselves, who thereby cast themselves into the forlorn State of *Out-Laws*, they deprive themselves of the Divine Protection, and no condition can be so deplorable. All the *Defences* which *Power* and *Wealth*, which *Wisdom* and *Alliances* can raise up, will prove refuges of lyes, when the *Divine Shadow* and *Protection* are withdrawn, *Num. 14. 9.* The potent warlike Nations of *Canaan* became

came Bread, *i. e.* easily devoured, when their defence was departed from them. No tidings can be so sad, as the Reply which God made to the *Israelites*, *Ye have forsaken me — Wherefore I will deliver you no more*, Jud. 10. 13. Oh ! whether shall we resort for Succour and Safety, when the Rock of *Israel* doth sell and abandon us ?

As to the Act, *praising of the Wicked*, nothing can be more reproachful, because it carrieth in it,

1. The most stupid *Folly* and *Ignorance* : For there is not a more hideous deformed Monster in the World than a Wicked Person, he has no Comeliness or Beauty, but is a most mishapen, distorted Thing, destitute of the Divine, Beautifying Image, and a very picture of the Devil, whose Child he is. What inexcusable folly must it be to praise and commend such an one, yea, or to cherish the *Vipers*, whose poison infects the places where they breath. And

2. There is notorious *injustice* in the praising and favouring of Wicked Men : Praise, and Encouragement can't be due to such, these are the just Recompences
of

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of Religion and Goodness ; whereas Shame is the Promotion that belongs to Fools or Wicked Men, as it is affirmed, *Prov. 3. 35.* If we will act justly, we ought to despise a vile Person, for no Praise or Honour are due to him. The Wisdom of most Lawgivers hath directed to appoint such *Punishments* of Evil Doers, as carry *Shame* and *Reproach* as well as Pain and Loss, by which they are more adapted to attain the end of Punishment, which is the maintaining of Moral Order in the World. And it is most equitable, that they who are the blemish of Human Race, and of the Society they belong to, should bear their Shame ; according to the Sentence pronounced on *Judah*, *Ezek. 16. 52.* *Bear thine own shame, for thy Sins, which thou hast committed — Yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame.* We might hope to see happy days, if *sin* were constantly attended with *reproach*, and not find Praise, and Esteem, as it has too often done. There is little hope of vanquishing this Monster, while it is nourished with so strengthening Food as Reputation and Honour : If once this Provision

Provision could be cut off, Vice and Impiety would lose the Day, and *Reformation of Manners* have desired Success; provided we comply with the Method laid down in the latter part of the Text: *But they that keep the Law contend with them*, or, against Wicked Men.

In speaking to this, 'tis not necessary to insist on the Character given to the Agents, *They that keep the Law*, (which is directly opposite to the Forsaking of the Law) which imports an inward suitable esteem of the Divine Law, which is chosen as a Treasure, and guarded in the heart, against every thing that opposeth it, and also an habitual Observation of it, so that it becomes the Measure and Rule of the Conversation, which is conducted not by the Will and Lusts of Men, but by the Will of God. This is one constant effect of the Grace of God, which works Repentance unto Salvation, to write the Divine Law in the Heart, and give it the chief Dominion over the whole Man, so that the whole Course of his Life is guided by the Holy Commandment of God.

Concerning

Concerning these, it is said, *They contend with the Wicked*, which Action I shall endeavour both to describe, and recommend : In describing this important Action, we are obliged to enquire into these things which it supposeth, as well as to set down the positive instances of it.

The contending with, or against Wicked Men, supposeth an acting on our selves ; the Original Word being so expressed, as to denote a reflex Operation. And some, who have narrowly considered the force of the Hebrew Verb, have rendered it, *Coccei Lexic. stir up themselves*. 'Tis evident, none can contend with another, who doth not first stir himself ; *Sampsons* great Strength could not be serviceable to him, when the *Philistines* were upon him, until he was awak'd, and did quit his unactive posture. If our Souls are asleep, and stupid, void of active Principles, which are to be exerted, 'tis impossible we should rightly contend with Wicked Men, which absolutely requires the acting of the following Dispositions.

Sorrow

Sorrow for the sins of others. He that can view the Impieties, or Immoralities, of others, with delight, and take pleasure in those who violate the Divine Laws, will not sincerely contend with Wicked Men. But a hearty displeasure against Sin, engageth unto this contending. This Principle moved righteous *Lot* to reprove and contradict the Wicked *Sodomites*, whose unlawful deeds did so affect him, that in seeing and hearing of them, *He vext his righteous soul from day to day*, 2 Pet. 2. 8. The Apostle *Paul*, though he stood single and alone, contended with the Idolatrous *Athenians*, because his Spirit was stirr'd in him when he saw the City wholly given to Idolatry, *Acts* 17. 16. That Spectacle, which others beheld with patience and pleasure, wrought a *Paroxysm* of Sorrow in his Holy Soul. The Jews thought themselves as much oblig'd to rent their Garments when they heard Blaspheming Language, as when the most sorrowful Tidings were brought to them. There is no Law which binds us to tear our Cloaths, at the hearing of impious Words, or sight
of

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of wicked deeds; but we are oblig'd to rent our Hearts, with Religious Sorrow and Displeasure.

Zeal for the Honour of God, and Interest of Religion, is necessary for the due performing of this Action. One who is unconcern'd about these things, will not contend earnestly against wicked Men. The *Ephesian* Christians have got immortal Renown, by the Character given 'em by the Redeemer, in the Epistle address to that Church. *Revelat. 2. 2. I know thy Works, and how thou canst not bear them that are Evil.* This Christian Zeal much contributed to make a *golden happy Age* to the Primitive Church, and would again restore it, might it please the blessed God to send down this Heavenly Fire: But when many professing Christians are lukewarm, and unconcern'd for the cause of our Common Religion,

C

on, this obstructs the contending against Vice, and those who openly affront the Laws of God. *Phineas* is celebrated, for his Executing Judgment on some great Delinquents, against whom he contended, because he was acted by holy Zeal for the Name of God, *Num. 25. 11.*

Fortitude in the Cause of God, and Religion, is another Principle of this Action. A Spirit of Fear and Cowardice, doth wholly unfit for this Service: When the Prophet *Ezekiel* was sent to the Rebellious House of *Israel*, with a Commission to contend with that degenerate People, this was the first of his Instructions. Thou Son of Man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their Words, tho Briars and Thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among Scorpions, &c. *Ezek. 2. 6.*

Con-

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Confidence in the Divine Assistance: If we make flesh our Arm, and rely on created strength, we shall quickly be discouraged, and our hands will be weakned, when we experience the difficulty of this Undertaking: None can in a right manner contend against wicked Men, who makes not the Almighty God his support, and confidence: In the last place.

Charity towards the Persons of Wicked Men, is a necessary disposition in this contending with them. For it is not an *hostile Act*, proceeding from malevolence and hatred to them, but an Instance of the most real kindness, and design'd to deliver them from the worst misery: This Combat is manag'd against Sin, which is the snare of Death, and Gate to Eternal Perdition. None ever so earnestly

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earnestly contended with ungodly Men, as our Lord Jesus Christ, who was always acted by the most unfeigned, ardent Love to Sinners, whose highest Happiness was constantly designed by him.

We come now to lay down the *Instances*, of this *contending* with Wicked Men: And 'tis obvious to any considering mind; That according to the various capacities of Persons, there are various corresponding *Instances* of this important Duty.

I. The exercise of Legislative Authority, in making Laws to prohibit all open Wickedness. The Magistrates *Sword* must be brought forth, and placed in view; that such, who fear not the Displeasure of God, or the Reproaches of Conscience, and of good Men, may be check'd and awed by a menacing Law; which is the proper Instrument of repressing Evil

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vil Doers. A Ruler doth not answer his high Character, if he is not a *Terror to Evil Works*: as the Apostle speaks, *Rom. 13. 3.* This has been understood, even by those who have wanted the knowledge of the true God. There never was a civiliz'd People destitute of Laws, to prohibit that which is openly wicked: We read how a Heathen *Nebuchadnazer*, Publish'd his Royal Edict, arm'd with severe Penalties, against those who should speak any thing amiss against the true God, *Dan. 3. 29.* Blessed be God, who has influenc'd our Law-givers to enact various Laws, to guard the Honour of the Name, and Truth, and Day of God. I know not a Nation in the World, which has so abundant provision of Excellent Laws against Sin and Impiety. as our own: But if the Law should sleep, it loses all its force, can't reach its end, and the worst

Crimes will prove insolent: therefore

II. The actual punishing of such who are found guilty, is included in the contending with wicked Men. If the Law be not arm'd with a Penalty, 'tis an Idol, which has Hands, but handles not; and these Hands are altogether useless, if they strike not those who affront and disobey Righteous Laws. To indulge and spare such Offenders, is Cruelty to them, as well as to the Publick: When those who have been intrusted with Power to Execute Laws, have neglected this part of their Duty, the consequent has been very dismal: This Neglect awakens Divine Justice, which on such occasion, hath used very severe Methods, both towards them who have merited the Penaltie, and those who have not inflicted it. The Examples of *Eli* and *David* are well known, in whom,
when

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when Parental Affection so far prevail'd, that they neglected to punish their Children, the Supreme Judge, did on that occasion use his own Sword, and strike both Parents and Children. In the History of the former, there is a very instructive Passage, 1 Sam. 3. 13. *I have told him (God speaks of Eli) that I will Judge his House for ever, for the Iniquity which he knoweth, because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them, not.* Eli's Office as a Magistrate, oblig'd him to punish his own Sons, and nothing could excuse his neglect, or prevent the terrible proceedings of Divine Severity. If there be ground (which I determine not) for the conjecture of our Translators, who in the Margin have alter'd the word *restrain*, into *frown*; it intimates, that the frown of a Magistrate, an indication

dication of his displeasure against Vice, belongs to his Office, and has an aptitude to repress that which is Evil.

III. Instance of this contending with wicked Men, is solemn pleading and protesting against Wickedness, by those whose Office requires it. A Magistrate hath many occasions of bearing a publick Testimony against Sin, and Evil Courses. As we read, *Nehemiah* (the Governour of the Jewish State) judg'd it his duty to testify against the prophana-tion of the Sabbath, and contend-ed with the Nobles of *Judah*, whose bad Examples might have corrupted others, *Nehem.* 13. 17. Such a Remonstrance, made by one cloath'd with Authority, is very Serviceable to repress Sin, which often despises the best Reasons that are urged by those of a
private

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private Condition. 'Tis the unquestionable Duty of all Ministers to plead the Cause of Religion, against every thing that opposeth it, with an unwearied Constancy; herein they are to imitate their great Master, who did not silently behold the Vices of the Age, and People to whom he was sent, but on all proper occasions testified of the World, that its Works were Evil, as himself hath declared *Job. 7. 7.* A

IV. Instance of this contending with Wicked Men, is particular reproving of Sin, when a just occasion is offer'd. This Office of Charity is enjoin'd by the Great Law, which requires every one to love his Neighbour as himself. This Subject has been frequently discours'd, and the Duty of fraternal reproving been prest, tho' ('tis to be fear'd) without desired success.

success. Indeed 'tis found very difficult to overcome the *Isotomia*, or culpable Modesty, which generally obstructs the performance of this excellent Duty. But there is another kind of *reproving*, which hath more facility, and would produce good effect, *viz.* The with-holding of familiar Converse from vicious Persons, which is expressly enjoined by the Apostle, 1 Cor. 5. 11. *I have written to you not to keep Company, if any Man, that is called a Brother, be a Fornicator, or Covetous, — or a Drunkard — with such a one, no not to eat.* I question not, but the practising of this one Rule, did very much contribute to the purity of the Christian Church, in her Virgin Age, when the Heroick Piety of Christians, did adorn their Doctrine, and more successfully vindicate the Christian Religion, than the most Learned Apologies

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pologies publish'd in Defence of it. And indeed, the strictest *Discipline*, and Ecclesiastick *Censures*, (though a proper Method of repressing Vice) can't attain their End, while the Apostolick Order is neglected; and those who *keep the Law*, extend their

Friendship to such as ^{*Xenoph. Lac.*} _{*Pol. C. 9.*} openly *forsake* it. A

judicious Writer has related among the Causes, which made the *Lacedemonians* so eminent for their Courage in War: That (contrary to the usage of other Nations) in that City, every body was asham'd to admit a Coward into the same Lodgings, or so much as permit him to bear a part with them at their Games and Exercises. There is is no Law that prohibits civil Commerce, and negotiating with openly Vicious Persons; but we can't contend with them, if our Friendship embraceth their Persons;

sons, which they (and others) will interpret a favouring of their Crimes ; which also spread their contagion, where a Passage is opened by Familiar Converse. This Consideration induced a celebrated

Diodor. S. Lib. 12. *κακομιλία* Pagan Law-giver, (*Charondas*) to enact a severe Law against *Conversing with bad Men*, for

which, the guilty were to be En-dited and Punish'd: We may fear, such *Pagans* will rise up in the Judgment against many professing Christians, and condemn those who practice not this Method of reproving the works of Darkness.

V. Another Instance of contending with wicked Men, is the assisting of those, whose Office obligeth to the repressing of wickedness. The single Eye of a *Ruler* can't scatter this threatening Evil, if he be not assisted by the Eyes, and
Hands,

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Hands, and Tongues of others. I know the Name of a Delator or *Informer* is become odious; but (as might be easily evinc'd, if it had not been already done) this infamous Title no ways belongs to those, who only witness concerning a Criminal Act, which ought to be discover'd and punish'd. In such Cases, Silence and Concealment make us Confederates with wicked Men, and partakers with their Sins. Surely, none can fix an opprobrious Character on the Excellent *Joseph*, of whom 'tis related, *Gen. 37. 2.* That he brought to his Father, the Evil report of his Brethren, who unjustly hated him, while he exercised a real Charity to them, as well as discharg'd a Duty he owed to his Parent. None has charg'd the Renowned *Chrysostom*, with being an *Informer*; though in a Sermon, wherein he vehemently

*Tom. 6.
Hom. 44.*

re-

reproveth the Sin of Swearing : He tells his Hearers, that after the parting of the Assembly, he would largely Discourse every one, that he might know who had, and who had not reform'd that Fault ; And if I find (saith he) any who have not reform'd , I will make them known to those who have, to the end, that all the Latter may reprove, and correct them who remain guilty of this Vice. To publish a secret Fault, may on some occasions, violate the Laws of Charity and Humanity : but how can it be blame-worthy, to witness against those, who declare their own Sin, and hide not their own Shame ?

VI. The last Instance of this contending with Wicked Men, is earnest Prayer, and Supplication to God, to obtain success to the Methods which have been mentioned ;

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ed; and the Divine Influence, which can effectually repress all kinds of Wickedness. The Divine Almighty Arm alone, can destroy this many headed *Hydra*, which often despiseth all Human Attempts. *David*, though he liv'd in a State that was provided with the best Laws against Sin, yet addresseth to God in a most earnest Petition: *O bring the wickedness of the Wicked to an end*, Psal. 7. 9.

The *Jewish* Writers (whose words are set down by a Learned Writer of our own) tell us.

That in the short Prayer used by the High Priest, on the Day of Expiation, this was always one Petition. *Let not the Prayer of them who break the Law, be gathered before Thee, i. e.* Let not God, by granting the Requests of Wicked Men, put it into their Power, to act their Evil Designs.

When

Dr. Outram de
Sacr. L. 1. C. 8.

When we pray, *Let thy Kingdom come*, this includes the effectual repressing of Wickedness, which most directly opposeth the Kingdom of God, that is, a State of Purity and Righteousness.

It only remains, that the described *Duty* should be press'd, and recommended by a few Considerations.

1. In contending with Wicked Men, you imitate the best *Examples*. This Practice is the most honorable *Mode*, which makes you resemble the worthiest Inhabitants of Earth, yea and of Heaven too. This was one distinguishing mark of the Prophets and Apostles, whose Memory is blessed: They willingly endur'd all the Hatred and Scorn of a wicked World, while they contended with it. Who would not prefer a likeness to such Heroes,

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roes, above any other empty Titles of Honour, with which, other Enterprizes are rewarded? Yea, this Practice is an imitation of the Angels in Heaven, who constantly attend on this thing, and most readily obey all the Divine Orders, for the opposing of Sin, and stopping the progress of it. The Angel of the Lord ministred to the Justice of God, in punishing the oppression of *Pharoah*, the Pride of *David*, the Blasphemy of *Senacherib*, and *Herod*. Lastly, The Blessed God himself sets us this Pattern: Who can read the Word, or view the Works of God, without discerning the Contest, in which he is engaged against the workers of Iniquity. We of this City and Nation, ought not to forget the terrible Instances of this Divine Procedure: He has contended against us, by a wasting Plague, a devouring Sword, and a consuming

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ming Fire. There are *Cases* of a dubious Nature, in which 'tis possible, in opposing others, we may through mistake, be guilty of contending against God : The wise *Gammaliel* judg'd it unsafe to use any Violence against the first Teachers of the Christian Religion, (which himself did not profess) because there was ground to suspect, lest those who opposed it, should be *found even to fight against God.* *Act.* 5. 39. But in our contending with wicked Men, we are safe from such a danger, We fight under the Banner of Heaven, and are *imitators* of God himself.

2. Herein, the most eminent Love to our Country, is acted and signaliz'd. This noble Disposition has prevail'd against the strongest Objections : When the Roman *Brutus* Condemn'd his own Sons to an infamous Death, and was a Specta-

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Spectator of the Execution; this Act is resolv'd into this Principle. *Vicit amor patriæ.* Wicked Men are certainly Enemies to the Publick Good, by provoking God to withdraw his Protection, which is more necessary to our common Interest, than either the Weapons, or Sinew of War. When the *Israelites* heard, that two whole Tribes and a half, had done something, which only appear'd a Rebelling against the Lord: 'tis related that the whole Congregation of the Children of Israel gathered themselves together, to go up to War against those whom they suspected guilty; upon which supposition, they concluded, that the Lord would be wroth with the whole Congregation of Israel. Josph. 22. 18. Which Conclusion, they prove by an unquestionable Instance, viz. *Achan*, who committed a Trespass in the accursed thing, and Wrath fell on all the

*Congregation of Israel, and that Man
 perisht not alone in his Iniquity.
 verse 26. If ungodly Persons did
 hurt only themselves, there might
 be some pretext for indulging and
 conniving at them; but the case
 is otherwise, they do a real harm
 to the Community, of which they
 are Members. Solomon (a proper
 Judge of this Matter, his Regal
 Office assisting him to observe the
 dangers of the State) hath asserted,
 That scornful, i. e. ungodly Men
 bring a City into a Snare, Prov. 29. 8.
 If any should censure the Accord,
 and Union in this Reforming De-
 sign, of those, whose Sentiments
 are not quite the same in some lesser
 things, they forget the plain Ob-
 ligation of a joint opposing a com-
 mon Enemy. Wicked Men are not
 Adversaries to one Part, or Order
 of Christians (of distinct deno-
 minations;) They strike at the
 Cause of Religion in general,
 and*

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and if it lay in their power, would not leave a Christian Church in Being. Our common Rule obligeth us to agree in defending the Cause of Religion, against all who seek to ruine it: and in prosecuting this Design, we exercise a real Kindness to our Country, and contribute to the Welfare and Interest of the whole Nation. The Roman History relates, that the Variance of their two Orders, *Patrician* and *Plebeian*, did sometimes endanger that State; but when their Contests were the highest, the appearing of a Common Enemy did unite them; the flaming War that threatned the whole Body, did melt the divided pieces into one.

3. There is encouraging Hope of Success in this contending with wicked Men. *Sin*, is in its own Nature, a weak and feeble thing,

like Darkness, which flies at the approach of Light. Indeed, the Number, and boldness of Evil Men, joined with the faint endeavours us'd against them, give an appearance of Strength to their Cause, but it can't stand its ground, when it meets a vigorous Opposition. How can that be strong which is supported by Lies and Falshood, and hath the Wisdom and Power of God engaged against it? This City has already seen the good effect of those Methods, which have been us'd in Executing the Laws made against Prophaneness and Immorality. The Vices of *Swearing, Uncleaness, and Violation of the Lords Day*, don't now shew themselves so openly as formerly they did. And though some begin to hope, that they shall be indulged in such Evil Practises, we trust the Care and Piety of our Honourable Magistrates, will frustrate this

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this impudent Expectation : And that the Example set in this great City, will influence other places of the Nation , to undertake a Design of Repressing Vices, and Impieties, which hath the praying Wishes of all Good Men, and the Promise of Divine Assistance, which can overcome all Opposition made against it.

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